

**International Centre for Minority Studies  
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# **MONTENEGRO IN SEARCH OF THE LOST STATE SYSTEM**

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### **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

The team consisted of five scholars: a historian – specialist in Balkan studies, a historian-anthropologist and a linguist-anthropologist, as well as the already traditional journalist – specialist on Balkan issues and a mediator-interpreter\*. The interdisciplinary preparation of the people who gathered the field material allowed them, though small in number, to carry out a significant in its scope research activity. The philologist's presence made it possible for the expedition to have a detailed field diary (kept in the Center's library) which reflects parts of the discussions and the heuristic moments during the research process.

The fieldwork was conducted from May 29<sup>th</sup> till October 6<sup>th</sup> 2001, but one of the team members remained a few days more to stay alone in a different environment and to add some missing elements of the current political and social picture in Montenegro.

The aim of the survey was to continue the study of the Albanian communities as they have been dispersed in the different Balkan and post-Yugoslav republics; to perceive the similarities and the differences in the Albanian community in Montenegro compared with the communities in the other Balkan countries, as well as the relations among them; to study the dispositions and the prospects of the Albanian community in Montenegro, the attitude of the Montenegrin society towards them and the dispositions of all Montenegrins towards the forthcoming referendum for independence, as well as towards the Serbs and Serbia.

The survey was carried out in Rožaje, Gusinje, Kolašin, Podgorica, Tuzi, Cetinje, Budva, and Ulcinj, visiting, as a matter of fact, all regions and a great part of the settlements densely populated by Albanians.

Over 50 persons, men and women, between the age of 20 and 80 were interviewed. Respondents represented all ethnic groups inhabiting Montenegro, i.e. Montenegrins, Albanians, Muslims-Bošniaks, Serbs and Roma. Representatives of all social groups were selected among them – intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, people working in the sphere of services, unemployed, peasants, etc. Representatives of the basic authorities were selected among the interviewed respondents, i.e. deputies from all parliamentary represented parties, an advisor to the President, mayors, and trade union leaders.

### **A SNAPSHOT OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DISPOSITIONS. ECONOMIC SITUATION**

#### *Geography and anthropology*

Montenegro is a geographical phenomenon. It is a mountainous country with more than 30 peaks on its area towering 2000 meters above sea level. It is intersected by deep canyons and gorges, the canyon on the Tara river being the deepest in Europe – 1660 meters. A glorious natural view opens before the eyes in the southwestern part of the country. The mystic grandeur of this nature is beyond description, the imposing sternness of the stone wilderness inspires the feeling that no human beings live there. Actually, this land is inhabited by a compact native population, hard as the stone, which, for centuries, has been constantly and tenaciously combating nature. (G.Savov. Montenegro, the University of Veliko Tirnovo, 1999, p.1).

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These are the reasons why during the 15<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Ottoman Empire was only nominally present in Montenegro. The whole region was proclaimed a Sultan *hass*\*, people were declared Sultan subjects so that it was not necessary to have Ottoman officers and garrisons to keep in subjection the local population, or to transfer feudals from Asia Minor to “Old Montenegro which is all of stone.... Grass here grows up to 10 cm (.394 inch), while the man’s height reaches two meters...”

Only 4,5 % of the total area in Montenegro is arable land and forests cover 38 %.

In 1991 the U.N. proclaimed Montenegro an *ecological state*.

These romantic geographical notes are necessary to introduce some clarity in the specificities of the local people’s temperament and view of life, as well as to explain the good cohabitation between Montenegrins and Albanians.

The high mountains have created an amazingly close cultural-historical experience and social model among peoples who are different in terms of ethnicity, morphology and religion. It is difficult to draw a border between the mountains of Montenegro and North Albania, as it is difficult to oppose the two mountainous cultures which keep the patriarchal-clan character of their societies even today and remember the traditional law, the laws of honour and the blood feud. Generic and family relations, the sense of solidarity, the cult of bravery and arms have been still well preserved. According to respondents-Bośniaks “one mother gave birth to Montenegrins and Albanians”. This comparative evaluation can be heard not only in Montenegro but also in Sandžak, Serbia. Sometimes they add to this comparison the Sicilians, too, hinting ironically of their leading role in the black economy.

Montenegrins are unanimous in their evaluation that conflicts and armed clashes with the Albanian minority are not possible in their country. In the first place, respondents from all social layers place the close culture and mentality of the two mountainous communities and the historical fact that there had never been contradictions and rivalries between Albanians and Montenegrins. A respondent, leader of one of the Montenegrin parties said: “There are many common things between the *Kanun* of Leka Dukagjin and the *Brda* Montenegrin law. Both traditions were based on the strong tribal beginning”. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the blood feud existed in Old Montenegro and according to the words of an activist from the Socialist People’s Party, the Law of Peter Petrovic was in force at the same time. “Anyway, Montenegrins are more delicate than the Albanians”, a respondent Montenegrin from Ulcinj claimed.

According to other respondents there are Elders even today among the Albanians-Catholics who are at the head of the *fis*\*\* and who have the last word in resolving family and tribal conflicts, i.e. they administer justice leaning on traditions.

In fact, the basic cultural and historical difference with the Albanian community is that already during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an overtribal state authority was set up in Montenegro, which undertook drastic measures to eradicate the blood feud. The tribal leaders and the Montenegrin Metropolitans were quite aware that the brawls among tribes and the multiple victims of the blood feud exhausted the country and opened the way for the Ottoman punitive drives. In 1796 the Skupshtina that was convened in Cetinje adopted a special proclamation for joint political and military actions of all Montenegrin and *Brda* tribes. This act, known as *Stega* introduced some political rules on the basis of which a supreme body *kuluk* was established by representatives of all tribes (about 50 people) in order to perform the functions of a supreme judicial and executive power.

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\* Hass - Landed property in the Ottoman Empire.

\*\* Fis - nature, (Gr), i.e. the big clan, relatives in the male line of descent. They all originate from one great-grandfather, observing the exogamy. Two lines of kinship are distinguished according to the traditions of the North Albanian highlanders, i.e. on the father’s side “tree of the blood” and on the mother’s side – “tree of the milk”.

In 1803 the Skupshtina adopted the first Montenegrin law which provided the death penalty for blood feud.

Regardless of these differences, respondents from both communities stated that the intimacy between the two ethnoses was prevailing and, secondly, they backed up their statements with the demographic situation: “the small percentage of the Albanian minority would not let them have big claims”.

By the way, the fact that their number is small on the territory of Montenegro is an argument for the Albanians, too: “What claims could we have, we are so few – 7% only! In Macedonia they represent almost half of the population and in Kosovo they were 90%...”

Montenegrians comprise 62% out of 620 000 total population and Albanians are 7%. According to the 1991 census Muslims-Bošniaks comprise 15%, Serbs are 9%, Croats - 1%, and those who self-identified as Yugoslavs are 4%.

The topic on Montenegrians' laziness, as well as on their bravery and strength prevails in the stories and jokes which “the others” tell about the Montenegrians. The today's Montenegrians combine in themselves the traditional values and modern behaviour, but as regards their outer mesocephalous appearance they really create an impression for physical strength and beauty, though only 20% of the men can be defined as extremely tall - over 1,90 meters, almost the same is the share of women who are over 1,75 meters.

We met a Bulgarian woman in a highland resort settlement who had been living for several years in Montenegro after she had married a local man. We immediately asked her, “Are Montenegrians really so lazy as it is said in the numerous jokes about them?”. Our compatriot burst into laughter telling us a new joke: “Montenegrians put a chair by their bed so that they could have a rest right after they wake up”.

The whole patriarchal-family and friendly fibre of Montenegro's society becomes apparent when researchers start interviewing the respondents in this country. Practically, it is possible to carry out meetings and talks on all hierarchical and social levels if only the scholars were recommended in advance by an authoritative person or were given the respective key names. Still more impressive is the fact that in Podgorica, Montenegro's capital, as well as in the other towns no one of the citizens knows the location or the name of the streets. They are quite useless in the Montenegrians' everyday life and probably their only purpose is to suggest a sense of order and to facilitate the state administration and tax authorities.

When we tried to find a street address we were faced with the entire helplessness of the local people and even of the road policemen. There were cases when our team was surrounded by several passers-by who were hectically asking themselves about the searched street each one suggesting a different direction and sometimes it turned out that the discussion was taking place in the wanted street itself.

Our team was surprised to find out that this ignorance was entirely compensated when we told the casual passer-by “whom we were looking for”. We got the following answer: “That's a different matter telling me that you are looking for X, Y or Z. , look, first you go straight, then to the left and a little further you'll see the building. Thereabouts lives/works X. Why do you ask me about names of streets...” As the local people are quite friendly, very often they took us straight to the person we were looking for.

The Republic's political fibre is perfectly clarified, too. Respondents from different public and social groups explained to us over and over again the secondary role of the ideology and the political platforms for the party partialities and the electoral support: “It is the personality that dominates in Montenegro, the party is not so important but the person who is its leader. I can't claim to be an upholder of the DPS (Democratic Party of Socialists) but I like the leader of this party, Djukanovic, and I support him.” Similar are the partialities among Albanians – they prefer to speak about Ferhat

Dinosa, but not about the ADU (Albanian Democratic Union) or about Mehmed Bardhi but not about parties.

After several days of investigation we understood that this patriarchal nature and friendly atmosphere had penetrated into all spheres of the political, economic and social life. Daily crimes are a very rare phenomenon in Montenegro, i.e. petty thefts, stolen cars, rapes, beatings. People know each other and their delinquencies cannot remain hidden. Nobody would dare to commit a crime that would put him under the ostracism and contempt of relatives and friends and even the society. Our uneasiness to be accommodated in a hotel towering on a high peak in a remote fortress from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and leaving the car without keeping a watch on it, provoked the hotel owner's bewilderment and ridicule: "You can leave your car unlocked. Nobody will touch it because they know that it is on my parking lot. You are my guests and the car is inviolable with all its belongings. ..."

In a beautiful seaside town we had the chance to watch the typical atmosphere of a life symbiosis between the modern business relations and the traditional hierarchical subjection to any activity. Early in the morning, at daybreak, one can see numerous motor boats and yachts moving chaotically in different directions – some of them deliver goods of unclear origin, and the others, of course, belong to the fishermen sailing coastwards. Boats are unloaded at dark – either when the night falls or much before sunrise.

As regards the fishermen, they bring their catch first in front of the hotel restaurant belonging to the most respected person in the old town. The cook examines the fish very carefully and selects for the kitchen the biggest and of best quality pieces. On the same spot, some petty restaurant owners, as well as some respected citizens of the old residential quarter, also pick out from the catch in a sort of internal hierarchical order. What is left from the fish goes to the market or to the small pavillions and pubs.

By the way, the Albanian citizens of the seaside town live well, in easy circumstances and they are pleased to demonstrate the external and ostentatious side of their lifestyle. Early in the morning, we could watch from the fortress terrace men going to the cafés in the town's center, dressed in black silk trousers, white cotton shirts, with neckties, black bowler hats and black glasses. When they raised their hats in greeting one could see carefully combed hairs shining with gel. As if the Hollywood heroes from some gangster films had settled in this town. Quite impressed, our team made it its aim to get acquainted with one of these heroes and to visit him at his home. It was a very disappointing visit from an intellectual and scientific point of view but extremely impressing and exquisite in terms of aesthetics of the interior and the natural scenery!

### *Economy*

The patriarchal solidarity is piercing the fibre of the whole society and in a some strange way it adds gentleness and decency to the Mafioso structures and the smuggled economy. Everywhere in the Balkans our team was faced with the mechanisms of the black economy, the illegal arms trade, traffic in women and drugs, but it was only in Montenegro where we understood that this country could be moulded by the pre-modern traditions and the patriarchal customs so as to become socially targeted towards people's interests. With a sense of humour, we immediately paraphrased that the cliché for *socialism with a human face* from the period of the totalitarian regimes in Central and Southeastern Europe had been reincarnated into *smuggled economy with a human face* in Montenegro.

In Montenegro cigarettes are sold at retail prices by the poorest, i.e. schoolchildren, students and pensioners in order to get some additional income. It is almost inadmissible for people in their work-able age to occupy this market niche.

Some shares of the profits from the illegal transactions are allocated for science and culture. It is impossible for the famous people of Montenegro's intellectual élite to get involved in talks and incited to criticism against the existing all-embracing system of black economy and smuggling. Respondents artists, academicians and writers were laconic saying that they had heard of *shverts* on the highest level but they were not sure if this corresponded to reality. They thought these could be political insinuations aiming at discrediting one or another politician and most of all, at the nation-wide striving for independence.

The external observer got the impression that there were not any competitive battles for ousting from the profiting activities of the black economy. As if all people obeyed some invisible but strict rules, i.e. hierarchy in the distribution of the economic spheres, of the profits and the persons committed to all accompanying activities – from the lowest to the highest level. It is obvious that there exist some regulations, which no one tries to violate and this, along with the lack of apparent poverty creates the feeling of a calm social atmosphere in the small Republic.

According to a respondent from the Union of the Free Syndicates the formal unemployment rates in Montenegro exceed 28%, but it is an open secret that about 80 000 people are working on the shadow. According to syndicates' data the average salary in Montenegro is 210 DM and 80 DM is the minimum monthly salary. To lead a normal life, according to Montenegrins' standards, they need 500 DM monthly, to lead a good life they need 1000 DM, and 2000 DM are enough for a family to lead a splendid life. There are 80 thousand pensioners, the average pension being 80 DM. Just for a comparison the syndicalists told us they needed 110 DM monthly to buy two breads and two liters milk daily. We, however, met neither impoverished nor searching in the garbage containers pensioners which is a frequent sight in the other East European countries. The social black economy is obviously fulfilling its public commitments.

Taken by surprise "not to see any poverty in Montenegro" we got the following answer of respondents syndicalists and common citizens: "Government has taken measures to combat the parallel economy but they came to nothing. For years on end Montenegro has developed and maintained its economy thanks to smuggling. It is namely the *shverts* that keeps a comparatively good living standard in our country. It is true that some people became millionaires out of this activity but, in one form or another, there is enough for all Montenegrins".

According to official data 60% of the GDP is spent for social needs but so far, governments did not have the courage to decrease these expenses.

*Shverts* is perceived by all as business without any pejorative estimation. Actually, it would not be far-fetched if we say *that smuggling is a national economy in Montenegro*. At the time when Montenegro fell under the blows of the first wave of sanctions that stopped the legal turnover with Albania for example, the businessmen from both countries pulled themselves together in order to defend their interests. Commodities are transported illegally by all possible means – by wooden and motor boats on Lake Skadar, by pack animals across the mountains, as well as across the Bojana river near its delta in the Adriatic Sea. There are stories telling that at the time of the most severe sanctions against the fuel transportation, it was transported through a pipeline built under the lake, or, that "traffickers disposed of their own pipe-line along the river bed".

Respondents neither rejected nor confirmed, and they did not denounce the suggestions either, that Montenegro's Government was directly financed by the smuggling clans.

During our fieldwork the Montenegrin society was seized by the scandalous cigarette affair, the Croatian "Nazional" daily reported. We asked a respondent journalist, former chief of Montenegro's financial police until 1997: "What are the profits of this affair where President Djukanovic's name has been involved?" Answer: "It's difficult to say but the word goes for hundred million dollars. During the sanctions they smuggled petrol, cigarettes, arms. M. Bulatovic wanted to stop this and he ordered to switch over to legal trade, but the cigarette bosses opposed this order".

Question: "Has the *shverts* of cigarettes been stopped now, after the disclosures made by Nazional newspaper?" Answer: "There is smuggling every day. Smuggling is a national economy and this psychology is dangerous. There is no alternative". People who are aware of this sphere of activity said that "one can earn up to half a million DM from one truck of goods only if the goods pass all obstacles and are traded off in the right place at the right moment".

We put another question to a deputy from the Montenegro's Skupshtina: "Do you intend to undertake some legislative measures in order to stop the trafficking and the black economy?" Answer: "This is an extremely complicated problem. We'd rather find a way to legalize all these activities. If we go to war against the smuggled trade with Montenegro's completely non-working economy, it means that we shall act against the people, we shall doom it to poverty but we are elected by this people."

A respondent deputy from the Skupshtina suggested a political version on the blames against top Montenegrin politicians that they were leading the smuggling activity or were benefiting from it: "All this is used to the referendum's detriment. There are three basic attacks – against Djukanovic who is a symbol of the struggle for independence, against the foreign minister Lukovec who takes pro-Montenegrin stands, and against the police which played an important role as a counterbalance to the extreme pressure of the Yugoslavian National Army."

The biggest market for stolen cars in the Yugoslavian region is located in Montenegro near the Yugoslavian border and it has been used by many countries from this region. Cars from Western Europe are offered for sale here at prices lower than the market ones. Opportunities are various: one can buy a car for 800-1000 DM, as well as brand new makes of Mercedes and BMW for about 20 000 DM. Authorities do not exercise any control on the cars' origin and the car traffickers have their own philosophy that there are no victims of this business because the insurance companies in Europe compensate the car owners for their loss while the living standard is rising in this region.

Smuggling, or black economy as a whole, has risen to the height of science and has turned into a very convincing life philosophy and practice. In 2001 official statistics claimed that 40% of the entire economic activity in Montenegro fell to the black economy and according to the unofficial experts this percentage was twice higher at given periods.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11 the only raw material which Montenegro used to sell on the world markets lost its good price. The crisis which covered the greatest consumer of aluminium, i.e. the aircraft building, significantly decreased the orders to the aluminium plants in Podgorica, even some of the already signed transactions had been cancelled.

Montenegrins' hopes for an economic prosperity are connected most of all with tourism. The country's natural capacities afford splendid opportunities in this sphere – from ski resorts and alpinism to healing baths and luxurious sea cruises. Most promising are the resorts along the Adriatic coast. There, along with the well preserved historical and cultural monuments, still functioning are hotel complexes and villas from the time of Tito's party ruling crest - already worn out, megalomaniacal, with marble foyers, exotic verdure and ample areas with unemployed opportunities. However, this economic prospect remains a mirage for the time being basically because of the poor infrastructure, the insufficient and uncomfortable transport and the inadequate prices of commodities and services. The Adriatic coastline is attractive mainly for the Albanian tourists from Kosovo and Albania. They are attracted by the chance to stay in a luxurious resort and at the same time, they feel among their own people as a great part of the local citizens are Albanians. Meanwhile, this place is appropriate to gladly spend the illegally earned money, without any fear that someone could track out the route of this money. There is a certain thrill in the possibility to settle down in areas that used to be the favourite relaxation places of the former Serbian nomenclature. A respondent from Albania confirmed that it was quite prestigious among his compatriots during the summer of 2001 to boast about having spent the summer in Montenegro's Adriatic resorts. According to the local authorities,

the tourist agencies and the interviewed hotel and restaurant owners, about 100 thousand tourists from Albania and Kosovo had spent the Summer of 2001 in the Adriatic resorts.

### *Policy and social attitudes*

Today the most topical issue in Montenegro is the referendum for independence. All interviewed were absolutely convinced that there would be a referendum. Their expectations were that next Spring they should set the date for its holding.

According to the ruling coalition the referendum is the most legitimate way for testing the political will of the population and for Montenegro's constituting as an independent state.

Some representatives of the Montenegrin intellectual élite in Podgorica were so sure in the referendum positive results that they even invited us on July 12, 2002 (Montenegro's national holiday) to have a glass of champagne to "the restoration of an old and proud state system - the Republic of Montenegro".

During the past 3-4 years the ruling authorities in Podgorica pursued a policy of extreme alienation from Serbia and of boycotting all federative institutions. One of the reasons for this was their desire to break with Slobodan Milošević's policy, which led to wars, casualties and economic sanctions against Yugoslavia. The other reason was their ambition to restore the independent state system lost some 80 years ago.

The purposeful Serbian policy and propaganda have formed in people a specific dual self-consciousness of Serbs-Montenegrins, i.e. Serbs from Montenegro. With Yugoslavia's disintegration during the 90s there started a reverse process of searching and restoring an own Montenegrin national identity different from the Serbian one. A lot of historical arguments have been adduced and stated. According to two academicians from the Duklja Academy of Sciences and Arts, writers from the local P.E.N. Center, as well as some authors from the Association of Fine Artists of Montenegro "they are for an absolute independence because Montenegro has a state tradition that is older and more lasting than that of the Serbs. Montenegro was an independent state almost 900 years."

Intellectuals brought forward the thesis that Montenegro's inclusion in Yugoslavia was not a unification but an occupation accompanied by an extreme violence on behalf of the Serbs against the local resistance which led to over 7000 casualties from 1919 throughout 1927. The members of the Duklja Academy of Sciences and Arts said that only in the last three years it became possible to tell quite openly the truth about these events.

They claimed that a very appropriate situation had been missed to conduct the referendum in May-June 2001 when, according to their data, over 62% of the population would have voted in favour of Montenegro's separation from the Federation. In their words, "the dramatic tension about the referendum is a Serbian propaganda and it was postponed under the pressure of the international community".

Some Montenegrin intellectuals pointed even to geographic factors to defend the idea for an independent state: "In terms of culture Montenegro and Serbia are an unnatural union. Serbia's territory belongs to Danubian Europe and Montenegro's – to Mediterranean Europe. Countries with close cultures like the Czech Republic, Russia and the Ukraine have separated, to say nothing of those whose basic elements belong to different cultural massifs".

The radical dispositions of the Montenegrin intellectuals have been most clearly manifested in the resolution of the local P.E.N. Center where "the aggressive Pan-Serbianism" has been attacked with the most biting words. In the end of this text the intellectuals conclude: "We support the



referendum. But in that case, the ballot must be clear and precise and must reflect Montenegro's long-term interests. We have two alternatives only: Montenegro - a sovereign and modern state or Montenegro - a Serbian province".

The interviews with the deputies from the Montenegrin Parliament and respondents from the Union of the Free Syndicates confirmed the sharp anti-Serbian dispositions, as well as the increased attitudes for independence. There exists a consensus on the necessity to carry out a referendum and a complete non-compliance with the Pan-Serbian assimilation policy. The prevailing part of the politicians reminded that "Serbs are oppressors and that in 1918 they liquidated the Autocephalous Montenegrin Orthodox Church annexing it to the Serbian Patriarchate."

Some intellectuals were convinced that the federal government should hand over part of its powers relevant to making decisions on Montenegro's development as it was of vital importance for the future of the Republic. A respondent artist, who was Djukanovic's keen follower, claimed, "Now all are shifting the responsibility. When the blame falls on the Montenegrin politician, he washes his hands with his Serbian colleague. Or else, Serbian politicians come here and claiming to be champions of the Montenegrin independence they pursue their own interests, the trafficking included. If we are independent we shall know who is who in this country and the culprits will bear their responsibility."

Unlike the political and cultural élite, the Montenegrin society is separated as regards the issue of independence. The "integrists" who are now less than 40% of the population wish Montenegro to remain in the Federation. Most often, they stress on the traditional historical relations between Montenegrins and Serbs, which were very strong during the past 80 years within Yugoslavia. A few hundred Montenegrins live in Serbia and the percentage of the mixed marriages between Serbs and Montenegrins is the biggest within the framework of former Yugoslavia. As an argument they have pointed to Montenegro's poor economic capacities to exist as an independent state, as well as to the Albanian factor that would destabilize the small republic at any moment. The opposition coalition "For Yugoslavia" has become the basic mouthpiece of those who want to preserve the Federation. Their position is also in support of the referendum, they wish, however the relations between Serbia and Montenegro to be redefined within the framework of the Federation.

According to the opinion of the ruling coalition the Serbo-Montenegrin Federation has a fundamental defect. Deputies from the majority claimed that "the problem was not in Milošević's policy but in the construction itself. The balance was broken after the four republics left the Federation. There are 650 thousand Montenegrins on the one side and 10 million Serbs on the other. With such a construction, it is impossible for Montenegro to enjoy equal rights – Serbia's domination is indisputable."

The fears of civil clashes during and after the referendum are not topical any more. They had grounds during Slobodan Milošević's rule. Today the situation is much calmer, the population is closer to reaching consensus on the restoration of independence and there are no circumstances that could lead to an extreme radicalization of the Montenegrin society. Serbia and the Serbian society on its part accept Montenegro's separation as an internal Montenegrin issue. Of course, respondents Serbs very often predicted with sarcasm the collapse of the Montenegrin economy after a possible parting. Aggression, however, is excluded on all social levels. It is the general feeling of both the political analysts and the common people in Belgrade that "after so many wars people in Serbia and Montenegro have matured for "a gentle parting" on the model of the Czech Republic and Slovakia."

After all talks which we had on the topic of independence and the forthcoming referendum, we found out that the prevailing part of the Montenegrins, irrespective of their educational and social status, had a state-creative ideal in the person of Slovenia. The supporters of the independent Republic of Montenegro see a wonderful future for their state on the model of Slovenia. These

respondents usually rejected our attempts to make an objective comparison of the geopolitical and economic realities between the two small republics and their usual answer was: “These things get compensated. They have one thing, we have another. They have some neighbours, but we have others”.

## **THE ALBANIAN FACTOR IN MONTENEGRO AND THE INTERETHNIC RELATIONS**

### *Albanians and their prospects*

According to experts Albanians in Montenegro are about 45 000 and according to the 1991 census they are around 40 000. They inhabit the eastern and southeastern regions of the country being concentrated in definite settlements and they are the majority of the population: they comprise 20% of the population in Plav and Gusinje and confess Muslim religion, in Tuzi, south of Podgorica they comprise about 90% of the population where the ratio between Muslims and Catholics is 1:1. A great number of Albanians live in Podgorica – both Muslims and Catholics. Other large groups of Albanians live on the Adriatic coast – in Ulcinj - comprising about 85% of the population and in Bar – over 40 %. There are no statistical data on the Albanians’ religious division, and yet, according to some experts, like the advisor to the President on ethnic issues, the number of the Albanians Muslims is much bigger.

According to some respondents Albanians are indifferent to religions and for this reason, there are no special differences among them caused by their confessional affiliation. Mixed marriages between Muslims and Catholics are a common occurrence, and the criteria which fathers follow when approving their children's choice include affiliation to a certain family and the property status. Family interrelations are subjected to strict patriarchal standards and the indisputable authority of the father or the oldest man. Young people have slight knowledge of the *Kanun* of Leka Dukagjin but often they obey rules without knowing that they are part of the *Kanun*. The older generation respects the *Kanun* and observes its rules.

Modernization and economic migration that have torn down the big *fis* and even the smaller nucleus families, strange as it may sound, have not destroyed the family relations and the patriarchal rules. In Plav, Gusinje and also in Tuzi we met young men who had remained the sole representatives of their families in Montenegro. Their parents, numerous brothers and sisters with their spouses and children have settled in the USA or Western Europe. Keeping to some internal rules, young men have remained in their native places, usually unemployed, to take care of the family house and the land. From our talks with the respondents in Gusinje we got the impression that usually they were the youngest sons in the family. Their numerous relatives send them regularly money and that is why the young men between the age of 20 and 28 are well dressed, they stay for hours in the café wondering how to beguile the time. They all are single because, according to tradition, parents must choose or approve their future wives but they are far away... To the external observer, this situation seems rather depressive, as these men are young and energetic, moreover, they are educated. All our interlocutors had secondary education and one of them had graduated in Journalism in 1992 in Priština. It was namely from this university graduate that we learned, for the first time, that in Montenegro they did not acknowledge the diplomas obtained from the University of Priština and it was impossible for a graduate from this University to find a job in Montenegro. The next days we heard this complaint again and again and this fact was also confirmed by the Union of the Free Syndicates.

To our question where his relatives were, the respondent journalist answered that 17 people from his family had been living in New York since 1968 thus starting the topic on the terrorist attacks on September 11. It turned out that the whole emigration from Gusinje was in the USA and the town

had an anxious night sitting in front of their TVs and radio sets and this anxiety continued with their efforts to get in touch with their relatives. One of our respondents had two brothers living in Manhattan and another one – seven sisters living also somewhere in New York. Though they had fears for their relatives they refused to make any comments upon this tragedy.

We changed the theme so that men could answer why they were living far from their families, lonely and jobless. “What keeps you here?” we asked. They were glad to tell us about their native place: “We have been living here from the days of the ancient Illyria. About 4 000 people - Illyrians’ descendants - are living now in Gusinje and the neighbouring villages.”

They recommended us to read Edith Durham's book, which they obviously highly evaluated because she wrote a patriotic history of the Albanians and one could learn from it that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century Gusinje had been a center of commerce between Skodra, Ulcinj and Novi Pazar. “We must be here to keep our houses, even to build new and bigger ones on our land because, sooner or later, all will come back”.

The next days when we spoke with Albanians in Tuzi and in some other places we understood that this had been a premeditated inter-community strategy - those representatives of the clans who had remained in Montenegro were fulfilling a mission: they guarded the land, they refused to sell it regardless of the price offered, they kept the houses, built new ones and expected “the return”. Near Tuzi we asked about an incident with Montenegrins who came there to buy land as a construction ground but they were driven away with guns. An Albanian respondent-local policeman answered quite frankly, “This was really because of land, let’s get it straight, we can’t sell land – our relatives will come back and there should be ground for their houses”.

We wondered whether this was a new mythology on the “return”. We were filled with doubts that people who had been living for 20-30 years in New York or somewhere else in the USA would come back. Probably the land and the new houses were kept for some “other own people” if some day they decided to come here. In Ulcinj, for example, we understood that Albanians from Kosovo were fervently buying houses – there is talk about 3 000 people who bought properties along the coastline. A respondent woman from Tuzi said, “Rumours are spread that Kosovars buy houses in Bar, but actually they prefer Ulcinj and that’s where they buy up the houses.”

A great number of Albanian refugees from Kosovo were accommodated in Montenegro during the crisis and NATO’s air raids but right after the withdrawal of the Serbian Army and the settling of KFOR, they went back to Kosovo. We heard rumours that about 20 000 of these refugees had remained illegally in Montenegro or were living with relatives but the local respondents Albanians and Montenegrins denied these rumours. Institution representatives also claimed that refugees had left. Only Roma and Serbs refugees had remained in Montenegro. They also claimed that the number of Kosovars that remained in Montenegro was quite small.

In fact, however, the real presence of Albanians from Kosovo and Albania is much greater though it is difficult to measure it because of their mobility and unclear status.

Among the rare representatives of the political élite, who are anxious about the Albanian factor, and they declare it openly, there was a respondent representative of the Socialist People’s Party (SPP). To our question “is it possible that the Macedonian scenario be repeated in Montenegro, too?”, he answered: “Yes, it is possible. Albanians are convinced that they will enjoy all national rights more easily in independent Montenegro than in FRY and they will support the referendum. At the same time, there is an ongoing process of hidden ethnic cleansing – from the end of June till the end of August Albanians have bought 3 000 estates along the Adriatic coast.” The same politician claimed that in September the number of citizens who supported Montenegro’s independence had decreased by 10% (from 62% to 52%) because they were strongly worried by the acts of violence committed by people coming from Kosovo.

We asked all respondents “whether there really existed an Albanian *Army for Liberation of Plav and Gusinje*?” as such information had appeared in the international media and this was one of the reasons to start our investigation. No one of our interlocutors confirmed the presence of such an army but they suggested some versions – concern about Albanians’ purchasing of estates, as well as their refusal to offer them for sale, the everyday crossing of the border by Kosovars, and the conviction that availing themselves of the tourist season and the illegal opportunities to stay in the Republic there is a constant presence of 15-20 000 Albanians from Kosovo.

Our young Albanian friends from Gusinje got anxious when we asked them about the army for liberation, they wanted to make sure that we were not deliberately provoking them and that they would not be impaired after talking with us. The conversation got nervous, tense and filled with suspicion. One of them even left as a sign of protest. Respondents: “We have more rights than our brothers in Macedonia. We want to achieve our purpose peacefully. We have two, even three Albanian parties and we want to solve our problems through them.” A retort from our team: “When we were in Tetovo in the end of the 90s, people convinced us that they were living peacefully, that they had their political parties and representatives, that they wanted more rights without any separatist tendencies but later they started a relentless fight and, practically, they set up pure Albanian territories?” They answered with a gloomy humour: “It must have been a military secret, that is why they didn’t tell you they were going to fight!” A rhetorical question on our side, which remained without answer: “Are you also keeping a military secret *on the Army for Liberation of Plav and Gusinje* and on your whatever future projects?”.

Albanians from all Montenegro’s regions claimed that they observed the *Kanun* but 30 years ago the feuding clans buried the hatchet on the Elders’ decision and since then there were no cases of blood feud. It was only in Tuzi where they told us about a quite recent case of murder (in 2001) because of blood feud. The hostility goes back to 1980 and the murder, which put an end to this feud, was committed in the USA.

Quite definite, the Albanians in Gusinje and Plav, maybe because they are quite close to the border with Kosovo and North Albania, are more reticent, more nervous, there is something half-expressed and strained as a bow-string. In fact, they all come from one and the same highland region - Malesja as the Albanians in Tuzi. They call themselves *maliso*, i.e. highlanders. They all convinced us that they were living very well with the Muslim-Bošniaks and the Montenegrins and they were hand in hand with them in everything. But when we asked them why they were meeting only in this café, they answered frankly, “Because it is kept by one of us - an Albanian”.

We asked our fellow-countrywoman how she felt things with the mutual co-habitation between Montenegrins and Albanians: “Albanians here are like Albanians in Macedonia. They want to live peacefully and quietly but if someone comes and tells them “come on!” – they’ll go. They are quite disintegrated from the Montenegrin society though nobody acknowledges this fact, it’s only the brandy that they take sometimes together.”

Albanians did not give a definite answer on the referendum issue. The prospering Albanians from the coastline answered flatly that they would participate in the referendum voting for Montenegro’s absolute independence. They expected better opportunities for business and tourism in particular. They were the calmest people, open-minded and rejected any variants of separatism, of hostility, of any interethnic contradictions that could harm business.

The respondents from Plav and Gusinje answered in their gloomy and reserved manner: “It’s all one to me if Montenegro will stay in the Federation or will become independent. We are not going to vote and the Montenegrins – as they like. We would go to the polls only if they are speaking of a special status for the settlements inhabited by Albanian population”.

In Tuzi Albanians are divided – on the one hand, they think that it would be wonderful to live in independent Montenegro, and on the other – they have their fears: “This means that we shall be

separated from Kosovo by a state border. If this happens, they will assimilate us because we are small in number and this is bad..." Question: "What if Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia unite...?" Answer: "You ask about Great Albania but this means to shed much blood, no, we don't want such a variant..."

All are unanimous for one thing only – Montenegro's separation depends on the decisions of the Great Powers and NATO.

### *The other ethnic and religious communities*

According to the 1991 census *Serbs* in Montenegro are about 9% of the population. This, of course, is a question of self-identification and this percentage includes not only migrants from Serbia during different periods of history, but also Montenegrins with Serbian national self-consciousness. Serbian refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia are also living in Montenegro, they lead a miserable life in hotels or other communal buildings adapted to something similar to hostels and typical refugee camps.

We spoke with refugees from Kosovo in the highland ski-resort Kolašin. They had left their houses and furniture finding shelter with their relatives in this town. Some of them have rent rooms and it is not a rare occurrence for big families to live in one room only. They have no hopes to go back to their homes in Kosovo because their houses or flats have already been occupied by Albanians. They live with the same lack of prospects for the future as the refugees in Serbia whom we have been interviewing for two years now.

*Muslims*, part of whom are already seeking for their new identification as Bośniaks, comprise 15% of the population. They inhabit the northern and north-western regions of Montenegro, i.e. the municipalities of Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Berane, and Rožaje where they are a majority. In fact, the Bośniaks *ethnonym* as synonymous to Muslims is basically used by the intellectuals, the political élite and quite rarely by the common people. This identification with the Muslims in Bosnia started right after the war and some of the Muslim population in Serbia and Montenegro self-identify as such, this process being most clearly observed in Sandžak region, Serbia. A great part of the Muslim youths prefer to study in the universities of Sarajevo. The relations among Muslims in Montenegro, in Sandžak and the Bośniaks in Bosnia are very close and the theses on the common ethnic and cultural genesis are of present interest among the élites. Some of the Muslims who live in settlements with prevailing Albanian population, i.e. along the coastline or in Rožaje, speak Albanian, mixed marriages can also be met there.

This does not mean an idyll mutual co-existence. They are very uncommunicative but they do not manifest any external aggressiveness. Muslim respondents acknowledged that they had strong concerns about Albanians not to provoke clashes through separatist demands as they did in Macedonia. For this reason they have a definite attitude towards the referendum for independence – they will vote for preserving the Federation. They are convinced that this would prevent the Albanians from forcibly imposing demands or seceding territories. And second, they are afraid of the fact that they will be separated from their relatives and friends in Sandžak by a state border. The fact that the region, which they compactly inhabit, could be administratively divided between Serbia and Montenegro turns them automatically into supporters of the preservation of some form of a union between the two republics.

The political representatives of the Muslims, as well as those of them who participated in the local authorities did not want to declare openly that they were for preserving the federation with Serbia but for the external observer it was quite clear that inwardly and secretly they were against the separation. A respondent municipal mayor told us in a roundabout manner: "I, myself, as well as the members of our party, are in favour of an independent Montenegro but, nevertheless, I think that politically, economically and historically Serbia and Montenegro are strongly bound. Perhaps, it is

more sensible to set up a loose confederation. Everyone should know his place, the economic interests ..., but together.” Still, toward the end of the conversation he resignedly said, “Frankly speaking, I was against Yugoslavia’s disintegration, too. In the long run, whatever the international factors decide, that will be.”

*Roma and Egyptians*\* who took refuge in Montenegro after they were driven away from Kosovo are about 8 000. One gets the impression that they are in a better state than the Roma refugees in Serbia. Whether due to more systematized and ample benefits from the international humanitarian organizations or to the “social” black economy, or else, to the great percentage (60%) of Montenegro’s GDP that is spent for social activities, but there are no intrusive dramatic and striking pictures of Roma living in misery in Montenegro. There are, actually, some begging and roaming Roma but their presence is somehow unostentatious.

None of the respondents from the other ethnic minorities or among the Montenegrins mentioned any grave problem with the local Roma or with the newcomers from Kosovo. In the capital we noticed the restrained but tolerable attitude of citizens towards the roaming Roma kids and their begging mothers. This calmness was probably ostensible, because it was obvious that refugees’ children did not go to school, that it was impossible for Roma to find jobs within the total high unemployment rates, and most probably they had already dropped out of the republic’s health system. This, certainly, will be another hidden problem for Montenegro, which sooner or later will appear on the surface with its dramatic tension.

## **ALBANIANS IN MONTENEGRO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONAL PROBLEM AND THE SPECULATIONS OF A KLA COMMANDER**

*The Albanian politicians and their views on the integration processes:*

During our interviews on Montenegro's independence we heard many times one and the same reply by women, men, politicians and common people: “Everybody should be a master in his own house or everybody must know his own place...”

The code of this refrain is hidden in geography. Villages, in the true sense of this word, can be seen very rarely in the mountains of Montenegro. There are scattered houses in the mountain, often built amidst inaccessible heights, or else, near the road but always secluded and safeguarded by nature at least on several directions like fortresses. One can see very rarely two or three houses grouped in close proximity. It is obvious that the landlord of such a house is the only master of everybody and of everything. It is impossible to imagine that the head of the household who cares and bears the responsibility for the subsistence and survival of the whole family would allow a representative of the authority (e.g. a tax collector) to enter his inaccessible home. It is still more difficult to understand their idea of integration in the Montenegrin society when its fundament lies in the culture and capabilities to live and prosper alone or with the support of the clan and the nucleus family, and most of all, jointly with the trusted neighbours and friends (called *brotherhoods* among the Montenegrins and *vlaznja* among the Albanians).

It is obvious that people who live out of the cities, in the highlands, are independent and they would like to manage their life alone. This is typical not only of the Albanians but, to the same extent, of the Montenegrins as well. That is why we never understood if there was any ambiguity in this remark when we heard it from Albanians - whether this referred to Montenegro's independence or to bigger independence for the Albanians in the republic.

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\* A Roma sub-group in Kosovo, as well as in the other Balkan countries.

Some of the respondents Albanians acknowledged that there was some coolness in their relations with the Montenegrins: "Montenegrins don't like us. Especially after the war in Bosnia and Kosovo, many friendships were interrupted, because the relations were filled with suspicion."

We tried to find an answer to our questions with the Albanian politicians. There are two Albanian parliamentarians in Montenegro's Parliament, which consists of 77 deputies. One of the deputies, a member of the Democratic Alliance for Montenegro had spent two years in prison for irredentism during the time of the SFRY. He was one of the initiators and authors of the *Memorandum for a special status of the Ethnic Albanians in Montenegro*, adopted in 1992, where demands for direct cultural, educational and economic relations of Albanians with their *motherland* (i.e. Albania), as well as with all other *Albanian territories* in former Yugoslavia have been put to the fore.

To our question "what status should the Albanians get in the Republic?", he answered as a supporter of the radical demands: "In places where Albanians are autochthonous they must decide their fate alone, they must have a developed local self-government with territorial autonomy. We have five thousand hotels along the Adriatic coast that are managed by the central power." Another question: "The most luxurious hotels in Ulcinj belong to Albanians, beaches are run by them, too - what are you dissatisfied with, then?" Answer: "These are Albanians who are true to the ruling party. Milošević also had Albanians (he had in mind some collaborationists)\*. The truth is that they are trying to belittle us by all means - they do not discuss our proposals in Parliament, members of the DPS (Djukanovic's party) are among the board directors, otherwise they cannot occupy these posts. There is not a single Albanian in the Council of Justice, which elects the judges. There is not an Albanian in most of the courts, nor in the Supreme Court and in Ulcinj itself, neither the Chair of the court, nor the prosecutor are Albanians. We, Albanians, have been marginalized in a perfidious manner"

To our questions on the Albanians' degree of integration in Montenegro we received quite a clear stand: "Albanians in Montenegro are part of the Albanian people. Problems of Albanians here are the same as the problems of all other Albanians who are out of their mother country. It's not an Albanian Republic that is being set up in Yugoslavia though Albanians are a specific subject in terms of culture and language, scattered and parceled among all the republics".

The suspense grew when the interviewer asked the next question: "Is there any danger of a Macedonian scenario for Montenegro? Is it possible for the Albanians to start demanding their rights arms in hand?" Answer: "This is not a good question, the question should be if Albanians have any rights at all in Montenegro and in Macedonia. A dangerous person is the one who does not give rights and not the one who seeks rights".

Another deputy from the ADU (Albanian Democratic Union) claimed that any Government, which did not have a project for a clear attitude towards the minority peoples, could not be successful. The ADU leaders required a clear platform in this respect, and of course, its implementation being convinced that in this way they would protect not only the Albanians' interests but Montenegro's general interest, too: "Such things as proportional representation, two-chamber Parliament and a right of veto on the part of the minority, might look heretic but we shall soon realize that they are urgently needed by Montenegro for the sake of its stability, peace and prosperity."

There exists also a third, new Albanian party in Montenegro, i.e. Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), which is trying to make its reputation as a civil party in contrast to the other two Albanian parties, which have already made their image of nationalistic parties. The leaders of the new party accused the local officials in Ulcinj, as well as the representatives of the Democratic Alliance for Montenegro in misappropriation of the EU funds granted in return to families that had accepted refugees from Kosovo

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\* Author's note

The supporters of the new party were more inclined to make compromises in the name of the good co-habitation but as regards the Albanian language and its usage they were unanimous with the other parties: "On a local level, Albanians have the right to interpretation in the institutions, but not in the Skupstina. Discussions should be led in Albanian, too, with interpreting". PDP representatives, as a whole, are for a more moderate line of Albanians' demands in Montenegro, for a co-operation with the all-national Montenegrin parties and for the republic's independence.

Obviously, it is very difficult to make a trustworthy prognosis on the prospects of the Montenegrin Albanians within the entire Balkan context. Quite different are their dispositions depending on the region they inhabit, contradictory are the positions of their party leaders, too. There are quite objective contradictions in the Albanian community caused by the clash between economic and power interests. At some places, where Albanians would like to live as they are living now, with no tension and in peace in order to continue their successful business, politicians fight for redistribution of the economic niches and they are inclined to adventures and creation of spots of tension. In other places, where people are strongly hit by unemployment and they are close to the border with Kosovo and North Albania, their desire is for bigger intimacy and unification with the compatriots from the neighbouring countries. Some others simply live in a tense expectation for something to happen in order to define their position and to take their place due.

Just when our team was in a difficult position to make a realistic prognosis, we met our new respondent, a commander and a many-year KLA warrior who helped us to fill in the missing pieces in our snapshot of the Albanian prospects in Montenegro and in the Balkans. That is why we found it necessary to describe in details, though not fully, our talks with this respondent whom we shall further call in the way we addressed him during our contacts - *Commandante G.*

#### *The stories and speculations of a tired KLA commander*

*Commandante G.* is 34 years old, born in a small village near Drenica, Kosovo region. He belongs to the big *Taqi fis*. He is thin, wiry and looks prematurely old. Later, when we had dinner together, we realized that the guerrilla period, the tension in Kosovo's forests and the months spent in prison had spoilt his stomach - he was a poor eater, hardly took a sip of his glass, fearing a crisis. He had extremely keen reflexes - in the late evening he felt us watching him from the fortress terrace, looked around on all sides and suddenly disappeared, noiseless and quick as a wild beast.

Our respondent has five sisters and two brothers and in this connection he speculated that birth rate among Albanians had decreased and today young people did not want to have more than 2-3 children, or 4 at the worst. He himself married a year ago and had chosen his wife alone - 30 years old, a university graduate in economics. They have a daughter but *Commandante G.* plans one more daughter and two sons. In 1993 our friend had been married to a woman chosen by his parents and negotiated with her parents, as the *Kanun* prescribes. They married in Germany and their marriage lasted five years as an endless nightmare. He spoke with bitterness that there was nothing more terrible than this custom - to marry a woman and to live with her as with an enemy, keeping her in the dark about everything ...

Then he went back to Kosovo and got divorced. His parents tried again to find him a wife but this time he opposed. While roaming Kosovo he happened to meet the woman whom he fell in love with and who became his wife. He believed that God helped him at a moment when he felt in the worst shape. It was difficult for him to answer our question "which God" because he was a Muslim but he trusted very much in the Bible, which he had read in details while he was in Germany.

Nevertheless, he obeyed the tradition and asked permission for his new marriage from his first wife's parents as the *Kanun* prescribes. His parents forgave him the divorce and accepted his new wife, and his former wife's parents, on their part, gave their blessing to him to marry for the second



time. His wedding ring was just like the ring of a real soldier-patriot should be - a nice two-headed eagle with outspread wings.

*Commandante G.* worked 15 years in Germany but he came back to Kosovo immediately after they started to establish the KLA: "The most important moment in my life was when I entered KLA and fought for freedom and independence." He fought in Djakovica, Prishtine, Preševo, Bujanovac, and reached Kumanovo.

The beginning was laid by several youths who took an oath to take revenge for 30 casualties from Berisha's. Very quickly, some radically-minded Albanians not only from Kosovo but also from Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro started joining them. In 1999 KLA numbered 10 000 men distributed in four groups, each consisting of 2 500 soldiers who acted in different zones of operation. A man about 50 was the General of their zone of operation and of their unit - a good and clever officer who was born in Debar, Macedonia.

Our *Commandante* had commanded 100 men and to our question who assigned him to command a company of 100 soldiers, he answered, "Well, I can't tell you everything. This is a military secret". Except Albanians, officers from Slovenia, Italy and Russia fought in the KLA, too. One of the best snipers was a German hireling. A special detachment of women snipers, Albanians from Macedonia, became famous for their boldness. Then, they went back to Macedonia and some of them got married.

He told us stories about the war in details - had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel. They relied on field hospitals and the badly wounded were transported by helicopters to Albania, in Elshar near Cucas, but the gravest cases were sent to Tirana. He acknowledged that during the war many civilian people died, while KLA suffered a few casualties only. According to *Commandante G.* 100 men were killed from his unit out of 2 500 soldiers. "By the way, the Serbs lost 1 500 soldiers", he added just for comparison. As regards the casualties our respondent commented: "Rugova will win the forthcoming elections because those who lost their relatives in the war blamed Hashim Taqi for that."

To our question how families made their decisions to participate, he gave his family as an example: "We are three brothers, but only I was a soldier, the other two took part in funding and purchasing of weapon. Each family decides according to their opportunities - more soldiers, or bigger tax, or else, voluntary donations. All take part". We asked about the revolutionary tax: "How much is the tax on freedom and is it collected from all - e.g., do they collect it from the Turks, Bośniaks and Roma?" *Commandante G.*: "The tax for freedom is 3% of the income and is a must for all Albanians regardless of the income sizes - it is collected from Albanians only all over the world."

After the KLA disbanding our respondent joined the logistic support for the armed groups in Preševo and Bujanovac. He was caught by the KFOR soldiers and spent some months in the military prison in the German zone. He made some curious comments how happy he was because they did not keep him in the American prison where he was initially sent. When they understood that he spoke German, they transferred him immediately. Since we were surprised with his comments on the difference between prisons, he added, "In the American prison, one day equals to one month. They brain wash you psychically until they get the whole thing off. While the Germans are a cultural nation - everything is clean, decent and quiet."

We asked him whether he had participated in the clashes in Macedonia. He, himself, did not take part because his commanders decided that it would be nice to stay with his wife as he was a newly-married man. Most of his 100 soldiers volunteered for Macedonia but not all of them were transferred across the border because there was a special selection, yet the crossing was hampered by KFOR since it was done illegally: "Before the Americans said, 'come on, please, you may go', but after Milošević's fall they wouldn't let us easily in Macedonia."

With a touch of bitterness he spoke about politics: "In a sense, the war is sort of business, bargaining... All those who are with us in Kosovo and Macedonia (he meant the military) have their own interests. That is why there will not be soon a solution on the Kosovo status, nor yet will the problems in Macedonia be solved. I am not interested in politics any more – it is all vanity. I want to make my living because I think that nothing can be gained under compulsion." Nevertheless, he said he was ready to fight again if summoned because he was a soldier and a commander: "I've seen with my eyes what the war means and I am definitely for peaceful solutions. Who has not seen it, he knows nothing. But usually those who have never seen a war make the decisions and we obey."

We asked him what he thought of the situation in Macedonia. It became clear that he fully trusted the propaganda theses of the Albanian ideologists: "Macedonia does not exist as a state any more. The border should be between Bulgaria and Kosovo. What is Macedonia, in fact, according to statistics – one million Albanians, the others are *torbesh*, and those who call them Macedonians are actually Bulgarians". To be more eloquent, he added: "After some time the Bulgarian-Albanian border will cross the Albanian Old bazaar in Skopje and along the Vardar river..."

A question from the team: "Is it possible what happened in Macedonia to happen in Montenegro, too?" *Commandante G.*'s answer was the following: "Yes, it's possible though it is known that Albanians here have more rights. Such a variant, however, should not be excluded. There will be no peace in the Balkans unless all Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia unite in one state. When the unification takes place there will be better opportunities for both the Bulgarians and the Greeks – for business and trading. When Albanians unite in one common state Prizren will be a center, a capital, as it was many years ago - the *Prizren League*, as well as the most important things in the Albanians' life started from Prizren." Question: "Are the Albanians in Greece included in this unification?" *Commandante G.*: "About 200 000 Albanians in Greece have been included in the unification. Speaking of the Albanians' unification - as we fought for a peaceful unification in Macedonia and Kosovo that's how we shall try also in Greece and if things do not calm down, we shall be at war again." Interviewer: "Greece will make things difficult for you, it won't be easy to wage war against the Greeks". Answer: "Serbs are real soldiers, but after we defeated them, the Greeks are quite easy to overcome". Comments from our team: "It is hardly likely for NATO and the USA to side with you in this case. You will not be able to rely on any support". Answer: "It's too late. We don't need any support. We are able to manage alone with the coming battles. We have everything – money, weapons, channels, military infirmaries, soldiers and strategists in Europe to decide the events".

The talk naturally comes to the tricky question "who makes the decisions and who develops the strategy and tactics of the all-Albanian prospects." Question of the interviewer: "Who actually would take a decision to launch a new offensive in Macedonia, or to provoke clashes, let's say, in Montenegro? Are these the famous political leaders or some *fis* Elders who stay in the shadow?" *Commandante G.*'s answer: "If it depends on the Albanians, on the common people, there will not be a war. People want to work and they prefer peace. But others decide. These decisions are made neither by Taqi, nor by Rugova, nor by the Macedonian Albanian leaders. The important decisions for the future are taken from abroad. There exists a secret Albanian organization in Western Europe – they are the brains of the Albanian national revival and unification. If someone is guilty for the casualties, that's they but not Taqi who only fulfills orders, nor the Elders who have no power in making political decisions. During the war Taqi was a fictitious commander, but actually another person was commanding". Question: "Who? Who are they?" Answer: "A military secret."

We, however, were very persistent and suggested different variants. We explained to our respondent that it was extremely important for the scholars to know the truth about the events, we offered him to write memoirs for the future generations telling them how history is made. Finally, he gave in saying, "I cannot write but I am telling you, so that you will make a record of events". He

returned to our pressing question: “In the beginning the organizers and the ideological instigators of the Albanian resistance were only four people – in Germany and in Switzerland. They got in touch with those 30-40 youths longing for revenge in Kosovo who committed themselves to *besa* (an oath of honour). Then these four ideological leaders became eight and they were not Elders but just some more elderly people among the emigrants. At one point, this strategic headquarters in Western Europe reached 15 people who worked usually clandestinely, scattered in different cities and countries. Nobody has ever seen them and nobody knows who exactly they are or where they are situated at a given moment.”

Our next question is: "Still, aren't the Elders of any importance when decisions are made?" *Commandante G.*: “Their word carries weight when speaking of the requirements and observing the tradition, but they have no voice in the military organization”. Our respondent stared at a photo on a journal cover that some of us had in his hand and said, "This is commander X. I know him, we fought together and now he is fighting in Macedonia”.

He speculated on the events in Macedonia: “We are obliged so much to our brothers in Macedonia that we shall never be able to repay them. We had to participate with armed detachments as they did it for us several years. Except for the soldiers, they supported us with arms, food and clothes. The disarmament, conducted by NATO in Macedonia, was a symbolic act only. Albanians have much more weapons than they have collected, moreover, they would not give the operative weapons.”

On parting we came to an agreement with *Commandante G.* that we should write our book quite precisely, keeping discretion on certain issues: "Remember, unless the Albanians unite there will be war in the Balkans, there will be KLA, too", *Commandante G.* said.

## CONCLUSIONS

Again in the style of the urgent anthropology, the aim of our diary is to present a snapshot of the Montenegro's society status, as well as the Albanian prospects in the Balkans without imposing any comments and recommendations. As a conclusion, we shall focus on two topics only that were studied quite closely during the field interviews.

The referendum for independence is the most topical political issue in Montenegro. It is a consensual topic for the entire society and for all political subjects that the referendum is inevitable. All are unanimous that whatever the result is, the referendum will give a greater clarity of the republic's status and at the worst, it will loosen, once and for all, the union relations with Serbia. In any case, this will be a future of greater independence irrespective whether it is reasonable in terms of security and economic development.

Undoubtedly, the Albanian prospects for national revival and unification have been strategically and tactically formed, spread and implemented by external centers (outside the Balkans). The fears of "the Albanian factor", of possible tensions or conflicts - though quite feeble among the Montenegrin society - should not be excluded. It must be taken into consideration that radicalization of the Montenegrin Albanians is quite possible and easy because of the geographical location and the widespread *ideology, mythology and strategy of the Albanian national unification* among the Albanian communities in the Balkans and in the world.

Antonina Zhelyazkova